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REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON THE SITUATION IN TAJIKISTAN

I. INTRODUCTION

1. In my letter dated 16 December 1993 (S/26912), I informed the members of the Security Council of my decision, after consulting with the Government of Tajikistan and others, to appoint Ambassador Ramiro Piriz-Ballon, Permanent Representative of Uruguay to the United Nations, as my Special Envoy for Tajikistan. The current mandate of the Special Envoy expires on 31 March 1994.

2. In a letter dated 22 December 1993 (S/26913), the President of the Council informed me that its members welcomed my decision to appoint Mr. Piriz-Ballon. He also indicated the Council's interest in receiving reports on Mr. Piriz-Ballon's mission and on any future recommendations I might wish to make in the context of that mission.

3. In the discharge of his mandate, in January and February 1994 my Special Envoy undertook two trips to Tajikistan, where he had meetings in Dushanb  with the President, the First Vice-President, the Prime Minister, the Foreign Minister and other senior officials of the Government. He also visited Khorog, the regional capital of Gorny Badakhshan, where he had discussions with various groups, including the field commanders of the major groups opposing the central Government. He visited Khojand, the capital of Leninabad region, where he held talks with regional leaders. During this period, the Special Envoy also had talks with Foreign Ministers and other high-ranking officials in the capitals of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Pakistan, the Russian Federation and Uzbekistan. During a visit to Rome, he had consultations with officials of the Italian Foreign Ministry on the coordination of United Nations and Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) activities in Tajikistan. In Geneva he had discussions with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) on political and humanitarian aspects of the Tajik refugee problem.

II. THE SITUATION IN TAJIKISTAN

4. The situation in Tajikistan, especially on its borders with Afghanistan, remains unstable and explosive. Armed opposition groups engage in cross-border infiltration and fighting with Government forces on a daily basis, while the

armed opposition continues attacks inside the country. With the onset of spring, military confrontations may intensify further.

5. Instability and fighting in neighbouring Afghanistan continue to have a negative effect on the situation in Tajikistan. This presents a real danger and could have unpredictable negative consequences for peace and security in the region as a whole.

6. Another alarming dimension is the danger of confrontation along ethnic lines. Serious tension already exists in the southern Tajik province of Khatlon, and a confrontation between Tajiks and Uzbeks in Afghanistan could easily spill over to Tajikistan and other Central Asian States.

7. The economic situation in Tajikistan continues to deteriorate rapidly. The transportation system is paralysed owing to the severe shortage of fuel, many industrial enterprises are closed, and the population is suffering from the shortage of food. There are interruptions of electricity and water supply in many provinces of the country.

III. VIEWS OF THE GOVERNMENT OF TAJIKISTAN

8. During the Special Envoy's talks in Dushanbe, the President of Tajikistan unambiguously confirmed the decision of his Government to start negotiations with the Tajik opposition under United Nations auspices as soon as possible, without preconditions or the exclusion of opposition personalities. In this connection, Tajik government leaders stressed the need to have the talks with the "real and influential opposition leaders" who control military groups and with those who have serious political leverage in the country.

9. With regard to the venue for the talks, Tajik government leaders suggested Moscow as the most appropriate place for negotiations. However, they were negative about the participation of observers at the talks, stressing that their presence, especially in the initial stages, might complicate the process of negotiations. At the same time, they supported the idea proposed by opposition groups and personalities based in Gorny Badakhshan and Moscow that the Russian Federation could act as a "facilitator" of the negotiations.

10. During talks with the Special Envoy, Tajik government officials expressed their hope that the opposition groups would agree to a cease-fire in the border areas and would adopt a restrained attitude at the time of the beginning of negotiations. On their own side, they gave assurances that they would adopt a restrained attitude and not resort to unprovoked military actions.

11. Tajik leaders also informed my Special Envoy that during the last year 27,000 refugees had been repatriated from the Mazar-e-Sharif area, but more than 50,000 of them still remained in Afghanistan. They stressed that the efforts to start a negotiation process should be complemented by concerted efforts to complete the repatriation of refugees. In their view, sustainable peace and national reconciliation could not be achieved in Tajikistan without the solution of the refugee problem. In this connection, they commended the efforts made by UNHCR and emphasized the need to continue the repatriation programmes.

IV. VIEWS OF THE TAJIK OPPOSITION

12. In Teheran, Khorog and Moscow, my Special Envoy held talks with leaders of opposition parties and movements, including the Democratic Party of Tajikistan, the Islamic Revival Party, the "Rastokhez" People's Movement, and the Coordination Committee of Tajik Democratic Forces in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries.

13. My Special Envoy was able to obtain the agreement of the opposition leaders to begin talks with the Government at an early date. However, they rejected the idea of having Moscow as a venue for the talks. As alternative venues they suggested Teheran or Islamabad. They also suggested that negotiations should be arranged under the auspices of the United Nations, with the participation of observers from Afghanistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Pakistan, the Central Asian countries and the Russian Federation. The opposition leaders also expressed their strong wish to have pre-negotiation talks with representatives of the Russian Federation.

14. The opposition leaders expressed their hope that the Government of Tajikistan would announce a general amnesty for political prisoners before the opening of negotiations. For their part, leaders of the Democratic Party and the "Rastokhez" People's Movement renounced terrorist actions against the current Government of Tajikistan and expressed their belief that political dialogue was the only way to reach a peaceful solution in the country.

15. In Gorny Badakhshan, the interlocutors of the Special Envoy expressed serious concern about the ongoing fighting in Afghanistan, which, in their view, could spill over to their own region. They believed that the critical humanitarian situation in Gorny Badakhshan would deteriorate further with a refugee flow from Afghanistan. In this connection, they stressed that sustainable peace in Tajikistan would be greatly facilitated by parallel action to bring peace to Afghanistan.

V. VIEWS OF NEIGHBOURING AND OTHER COUNTRIES

16. The Special Envoy's interlocutors in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Pakistan, the Russian Federation and Uzbekistan strongly supported the efforts of the United Nations to bring the Tajik parties to the negotiating table as soon as possible and, through political dialogue, to reach agreement on a cease-fire. They supported the view that the inter-Tajik talks should start without preconditions or the exclusion of possible counterparts on either side.

17. Some officials of countries neighbouring Tajikistan raised their concern over the danger of further escalation of fighting both at the Tajik-Afghan border and inside Tajikistan itself. In their assessment, time was running out for engaging exiled Tajik leaders and the Government in a serious effort at reconciliation.

18. Representatives of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Pakistan and the Russian Federation each suggested their capitals as a venue for inter-Tajik talks and

expressed their readiness to facilitate them in any way the United Nations would believe necessary.

VI. LATEST DEVELOPMENTS AND OBSERVATIONS

19. In order to facilitate the resolution of the differences between the Tajik Government and the opposition on the issues of venue and the presence of observers at the talks, as well as to speed up their early beginning, the Government of the Russian Federation agreed with the Tajik opposition's request to have unofficial consultations with them before the start of the political dialogue between the Tajik parties. During a visit to Teheran on 6 and 7 March 1994, Mr. A. Adamishin, Special Envoy of President B. Yeltsin and First Deputy Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation, obtained the agreement of Tajik opposition leaders to have Moscow as the venue for talks. At the proposal of the opposition leaders, Mr. Adamishin agreed to a rotation of the venue to Teheran and Islamabad after the Moscow round. There was also an agreement that Afghanistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Pakistan, the Russian Federation and the Central Asian States would be observers at the talks.

20. In a letter of 23 March 1994 to my Special Envoy, the President of Tajikistan accepted the modifications in the format of negotiations that were agreed upon by Mr. Adamishin and Tajik opposition leaders in Teheran, although the issue of the venues for the future rounds of negotiations may be brought up at the first round. He stated that the Government of Tajikistan was prepared to start negotiations with the opposition in Moscow as soon as possible.

21. In a letter to my Special Envoy dated 26 March 1994, Mr. A. Turojanzodah, head of the delegation of the Tajik opposition for the talks with the Government and the Deputy Chairman of the Islamic Revival Party of Tajikistan, informed him that the delegation of the Tajik opposition was prepared to start talks in Moscow as soon as possible, without preconditions.

22. In view of the above developments, I instructed my Special Envoy to invite the Tajik parties to a first round of talks to be held in Moscow. I also instructed him to inform the Governments of Afghanistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, the Russian Federation and Uzbekistan, which would participate in the talks as observers.

23. I also decided to extend the current mandate of my Special Envoy, which expires at the end of March 1994, for another three months until the end of June 1994. I believe it would also be necessary to extend for the same period the mandate of a small group of United Nations officials currently in Tajikistan. They would provide essential substantive and other support for the activities of the Special Envoy.

24. As will be recalled, in my letter dated 26 April 1993, I informed the members of the Security Council that the mandate of my Special Envoy was threefold, namely:

(a) To obtain agreement on a cease-fire and make recommendations on such international monitoring mechanisms as may be appropriate;

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(b) To ascertain the positions of all the concerned parties and to make good offices available to assist the establishment of a process of negotiations for a political solution;

(c) To enlist the help of neighbouring countries and others concerned in achieving the above objectives.

I have now added the following provision to this mandate: "At the request of the parties concerned, to provide good offices during the political negotiations on national reconciliation".

25. The agreement of the Tajik parties to begin a political dialogue on national reconciliation is a welcome development. It gives the Tajik people the chance to close a tragic chapter in their history and to prevent further suffering and bloodshed. I will be ready to recommend to the Security Council a positive response to any reasonable request the parties may make for international monitoring mechanisms as may be appropriate.
